

/15 cont./

854 /o juat/ for the coming child. Many times the mother is forced to improvise items by using old robes to wrap him in or a bag made of agave fiber for his hammock to protect him from the cold at night.

The Guajiro woman who is in contact with civilization and is comfortably off economically prepares a hammock for the arrival of the child, or weaves it or has it made afterward, using the banks of cotton thread she has received as gift. Children wear clothes only when they go on trips. If they are baptized in the Catholic faith, they receive their outfit /o juat/ from their godmother, who is also expected to present a dress to the mother. As the child usually goes about naked, they do not make any clothes to wear. Some rather long cloths useful as swaddling clothes and coverlets are prepared and serve various purposes. Wherever possible the mothers try to avoid the child's dirtying them with his excretions, in order to lighten the problem of cleanliness, since water is scarce. /16/

854 Neither are the Guajiro mothers in the habit of wrapping bellybands round their infants. The navel is left exposed even when it is not completely healed. For this reason ruptures are frequent as well as the death of the newly born due to infection of the navel. But they do use a kind of awning fixed over the child's hammock to protect him from falling centipedes, snakes, and scorpions that abound in the roofs of the huts, which are covered with plant materials.

. . .

Care, training, and treatment of young children. From birth the child is looked after by people other than his mother, as she is obliged to seek such assistance to be able to attend to her other domestic obligations or to rest and have someone to whom she can delegate this care. When she goes to a place relatively near by, the mother does not take the child but leaves it in the care of his older brothers and sisters or her relatives, when they

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The greater part of the coast of La Guajira, which measures in all some 300 kilometers, belongs to Colombia. It starts from the Rfo Hacha in the west and extends to Lake Maracalle in the east. It may be divided into two general parts, one low and liable to flooding, the other highland rising above the coast. The low part starts from Fajina Channel, which flows into Lake Maracalle in front of San Carlos Island and continues approximately to the port of Cojano. From there onward the land rises from the sea in the form of cliffs roughly to the level of Castillón, a point where the coast level descends slightly to rise again near Punta Epoda due to the eastern spur from the Sierra de Macuira, which, as we have noted in previous paragraphs, then lose themselves in the sea. From this point, going always toward the west, the coast is rocky and inaccessible because of its continental structure.

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In the far western part of the La Guajira coast we find the most important saltworks that are being exploited in the country, such as those of Pájaro, Manure, and Bahía Honda which supply salt to the major part of the coastal department and even to those in the interior of the republic. The coast of this part has numerous beautiful and deep bays among which Bahía Honda is outstanding.

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Along the coast rich fishing grounds are found, such as Bahía Honda, Cabo de la Vela, Cardón, and Carrizal, centers of fishing and pearl exploitation. Unfortunately, it has not been

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found practicable to make use of all the commercial navigation and fishing possibilities of this coast due to the absence of potable water in the vicinity. This we were well able to appreciate when we found that the water required for drinking in Carrizal and San José de Bahía Honda, during our stay in these regions, was transported distances greater than ten kilometers.

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The most important ports of the coast of La Guajira, from west to east, are Ahuyama; Manure, center of the salt industry; Cardón and Carrizal, pearl fishing centers; San José de Bahía Honda, on the bay of the same name, also engaged in the salt industry, and Puerto Eirella, center of the maritime traffic of motorized sailing boats plying between the islands of Aruba and Curaçao, and Puerto López.

Our provisions were at an end. We had been too generous and not rationed them strictly, the men having complained of hunger the whole time. Now we were suffering for it.

Away in the distance, well out of range, we saw a *senado*, a deer, making off through the cactus with graceful bounds. Where did the deer drink? Surely they would not dare approach the Indians' water-holes, which were either guarded or covered.

"Deer do not drink," said the Indians. "They are content with the dew they can lick out of the cactus flowers."

We were thus without both food and water. We whites had tinned food, but the Indians only appreciated the empty tin. The Lad then offered to get us some food and water. He had not been away more than an hour, when he returned with a young girl carrying a live kid in her arms. She wore nothing but the remnants of a woman's loin cloth, and apparently knew that white people did not approve of nakedness, for she tried to hide her charms behind the kid.

We therefore gave her a piece of white cloth in payment, although it was really a ploy to let her cover herself, for she was the shapeliest Indian girl we had yet seen in the peninsula. The cloth would protect her from the sun and make her fair-skinned and beautiful, so she was overjoyed and offered to show us the way to what she said was a much better water hole.

This new water hole was shaded by some divi-divi trees—the trees were withered and their shade sparse—and surrounded by reddish hillocks. It was not very deep and a group of women were bathing in it. They paid no attention to us, nakedness in the bath being considered decent. Our Indians and animals were able to drink as much as they liked there, and we also filled our water-containers. Then we moved on looking for a suitable place in which to eat our goat in peace.

Gladvet, our photographer, put up the tent to give us a little shade, and meanwhile the Indians slaughtered the kid and cut it up. My wife cooked the pieces we had taken for ourselves, helped by the little girl who had come with us. She was now wearing the piece of cloth like a pinafore and

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piece made the arrow stick in a bush, instead of piercing 411
through it. Other arrows were really harpoons. The head
was fastened to the shaft by a string wound round it; it
loosened on impact, and the shaft with its cross-piece stuck
in the bush, preventing the wounded animal from escaping.
One of the youths shot arrows that whistled when they
flew through the air. The sound was made by a small
hollow seed-case fixed to the shaft. I asked about poisoned
arrows and after some hesitation, they produced one, the
only one they had. They would not part with it.

Here, at last, was one of the notorious poisoned arrows
for which both the Indians themselves and the white men
entertained the greatest respect. As usual with South
American arrows, this one was made of a light reed shaft,
into which was stuck a plug of wood to which the actual
head was fastened. This consisted of the tail-barb of a [825]
sting-ray. The early conquerors of this part of South
America encountered Indians who used arrows with heads
made of fish-spines. The point of these arrows is roughly
four inches long; it is thin and narrow and has fine barbs.
It is stuck into the wooden plug, which is split vertically,
and secured with a binding of thread. The Indians showed
us how easily it became detached. The barbs made it diffi-
cult to pull out, and they said that it often broke off, leav-
ing a piece in the wound.

Sting-rays are not uncommon in the lagoons of the 136
border areas of Guajira, and during the rains they are to be
found everywhere. They follow the rivers up from the sea
and seem to like shallow water, where they lie treacherously
buried in the mud of the bottom. If you tread on one, it
gives you a very nasty sting. Are they poisonous? Some
people say that they are. Some travel writers of the present
day have tried to give their readers that impression, but it
is not correct. The wound, however, is painful and difficult
to heal. It becomes easily infected, which is due to the mem-
branes adhering to the sting. That is what the well-known 136
toxicologist who made an exhaustive examination of my 411
Guajiro arrows when I returned home stated. He pointed
out that the sting-ray is also found in the Mediterranean,

- 136 and that one classic Greek author says that Odysseus him-
 411 self died as the result of a thrust from a spear which had a
 ray's sting for a head. If that were the case, the head must
 have been poisoned, or else there was infection. The sting
 of the Mediterranean ray is not poisonous in itself. Guajiro
 arrows, however, are poisoned with a grey-yellow substance
 411 adhering to the head. The Indians carefully removed the
 reed case protecting the head and showed me the poison. I
 asked what the stuff was made of, but they did not know.
 That, they said, was the secret of the piaches, the medicine
 men; and they also said that they did not even know where
 the arrows came from, nor who prepared the poison.
 Francisco later assured us that they were telling the truth.
 Poisoned arrows were rare nowadays, he said, and difficult
 to come by. I told him to inquire about such arrows every-
 where, and that I should gladly pay well for them. This he
 did, and I had got quite a little collection before I left
 Guajira. It is now priceless. The manufacture of poisoned
 arrows seems to have ceased a few years later.

The accounts of the Indians and white people agreed that
 no effect of the poison was felt until some days later; the
 wounded person had violent attacks of cramp which
 quickly caused death. The wound made by the brittle point
 was not serious in itself and never mortal, which made the
 effects of it seem all the more mysterious and fateful.

Celedon, a priest who wrote a description of the arrows
 in the nineteenth century, and several later writers, have
 said that the poison is prepared by pounding poisonous
 creatures, snakes, frogs, spiders and ants to a pulp, which is
 allowed to lie and rot. Eventually the pulp is boiled, and
 all sorts of precautions are taken, the preparation of poison
 being generally considered a hazardous undertaking. The
 details these writers give of all the poisonous animals used
 would seem to be apocryphal. The Indians like telling fan-
 tastic stories about the arrows, and even the early con-
 querors were regaled with them. However, if a mass con-
 sisting of rotting animal remains is thoroughly boiled there
 cannot be any live bacteria left to cause an infection, and as
 long as there was an interval before the 'poison' took

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our hammocks to sleep. When I was a student, one of the stock questions asked by our professor of geography was: 'Why don't the Indians of Patagonia sleep in hammocks?' The correct answer was: 'The trees are too few and far between.' The Indians of Gajiro took stakes with them which they drove into the hard ground when they made camp; but we could not give our animals such an extra burden and so had to sleep on the ground where there were ants and giant millipedes. Cactus bushes could suddenly come to life and a branch stretch towards one with spikes jutting, ready to sting, so good was their camouflage when sitting on a cactus.

We now met some very friendly Indians. As they sat by their fire they began telling myths and legends, and when they noticed that we were interested they continued. We learned that some blocks of stone that we would see the next morning and which had human shape, were really white people who had been petrified. They had died of thirst. Arijuna, the white ones, cannot stand thirst. The Indians can go three days without water, but the white man will endure only one. Therefore Martiwa, the rain-spirit, said to the white people: 'You live for ever dying of thirst.'

We agreed with that.

We could hear the roar of surf. Calimsule, the old Bearded One, told us that the noise really came from wild cattle bellowing out there, having been hunted and finally driven out into the water where some were transformed into turtles, others into rocks.

'There are dangers, here,' the old man went on. There's a *majsyura*, a maiden, lives in a cave in one rock, and lures men to their doom. No living person can enter the cave, but the siren—we can call her that—roams around in rich and beautiful clothes. (She shows similarities, like her Moorish counterpart, to our water- or wood-nymphs.) The *majsyura* now and again emerges by day as well, shows herself to someone she likes, leads him astray and to her grotto, where she lets him taste of her mysteries. He is so enchanted by his experiences that he never returns. That